



3010 Grand Avenue
Waukegan, IL 60085-2399
Phone: (847) 377-8000
Fax: (847) 360-3656

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Contact: Leslie Piotrowski
(847) 377-8055
Marcia Stanek
(847) 377-8099

Check Online for Lake Michigan Beach Closings

Lake County beach-goers can now conveniently check online to see if any Lake Michigan beaches are closed. The Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center has partnered with the Surfrider Foundation and Earth 911 to provide beach-goers with daily updates on beach closings at nine Lake County beaches. The link to this information is on the Health Department's web site at: www.co.lake.il.us/health.

The following beaches are included on the site: North Point Marina in Winthrop Harbor, Illinois Beach State Park in Zion (North and South beaches), Waukegan Municipal Beach in Waukegan (North and South beaches), Sunrise Beach in Lake Bluff, Forest Park Beach in Lake Forest, Park Avenue Boating Beach in Highland Park, and Rosewood Beach in Highland Park. The water quality status is updated on a daily basis; a green indicator shows that a beach is open and a red indicator shows that a beach is closed.

Most beach closings and advisories are due to the detection of elevated levels of bacteria, which indicate the presence of potentially harmful microorganisms from human or animal wastes.

These wastes typically enter the water through sewage spills, sewage treatment plants, sanitary sewers, and runoff from nearby towns. The wastes can also be from malfunctioning septic systems or boats. When storms occur, an advisory may be put out due to heavy rains that may have caused a rise in the level of pollution, making it unsafe to swim in the water for up to 72 hours.

The Lake County Health Department's Lakes Management Program staff monitors nearly 100 beaches for fecal contamination, including Lake Michigan's beaches. Staff also conducts technical surveys of 32 inland lakes each year to determine what types of protection and restoration are needed to maintain the lakes.

In 2003 the following lakes are being studied: Cedar Lake, Cross Lake, Deep Lake, Dugdale Pond, East Loon Lake, Fairfield Marsh, Flint Lake, Gages Lake, Half-Day Pit, IMC Lake, Island Lake, Lake Forest Pond, Lake Louise, Lake Miltmore, Lambs Farm Lake, Little Silver Lake, McDonald Lake 1, McDonald Lake 2, North Churchill Lake, Old Oak Lake, Old School Lake, Pulaski Pond, Redwing Marsh, Round Lake, Schreiber Lake, Seven Acre Lake, South Churchill Lake, Sterling Lake, Taylor Lake, West Loon Lake, Willow Lake and Wooster Lake.

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The Health Department's Lakes Management Program promotes protection of the environment countywide in order to perpetuate the biodiversity, economic, recreational and aesthetic values of area lakes. The County's waters are under siege from soil erosion, nutrient overload, exotic species invasion, contamination, recreational use conflicts and overcrowding. For more information, contact the Health Department's Lakes Management Unit at (847) 377-8030.

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